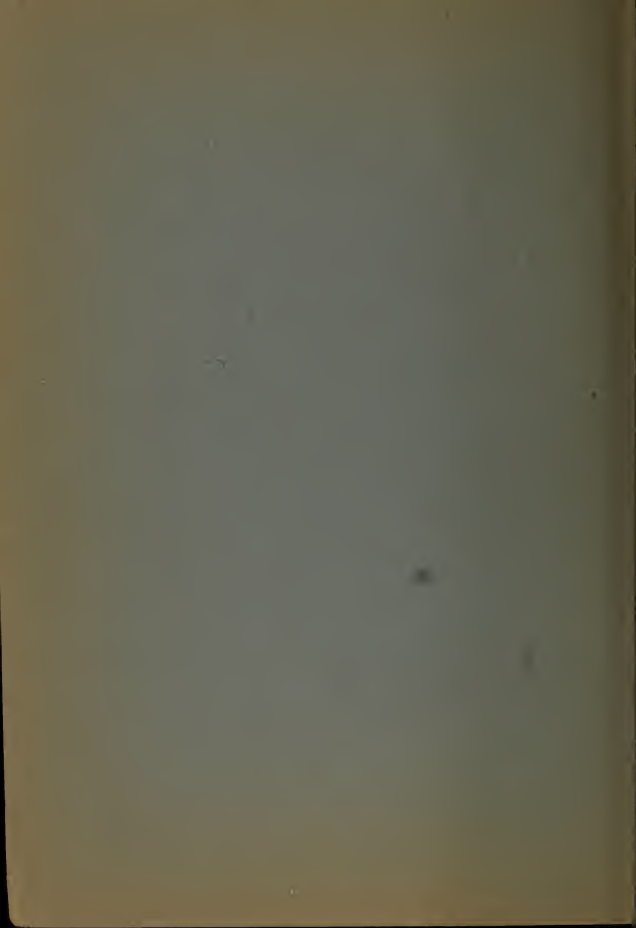


LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 579  
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

# The Three Sphinxes and Other Poems

George Sylvester Viereck



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HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY  
GIRARD, KANSAS

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[Other selections from Mr. Viereck's poetry appear in the Haldeman-Julius Pocket Series under the title "The Haunted House and Other Poems," No. 578.]

## THE POET PSYCHO-ANALYZES HIMSELF

**T**HIS volume, like its predecessor, "The Haunted House, and Other Poems," No. 578, contains selections from "Nineveh and Other Poems," "The Candle and the Flame," "Songs of Armageddon," in addition to a number of poems not previously published in book form. The second volume embraces a number of lyric ballads, being on the whole less intensely personal, if no less intensely passionate than volume one.

However, such differences are superficial. Wherever we touch a book, we touch a man. If we but search an author, we always discover a master key! Every manifestation of the Life Force is a confession. It is impossible to write a treatise on radio without revealing one's self. The libido, however disguised, will always assert itself.

It was my original intention to divide my poetry into certain well defined psychological groups. There are clusters of thought and emotions, "complexes," to use the vocabulary of psycho-analysis, which seem to occur again and again in my verse. Eros and Jesus, Lilith and Eve, constitute my chief lyric "complexes."

Almost every poem owes its inspiration to one of these four fundamental types. However,

no symbol is entirely adequate. At every step the complexes grow more complex. Frequently one merges into the other.

"The Three Sphinxes" visualizes the conflict between Jesus and Eros, between heavenly and earthly love; between Lilith and Eve, love, sweetly human, and "woman wailing for her demon lover." The antagonism between Eros and Jesus appears in "Spring": an attempt to synthesize the two conceptions enlivens the finale of "Jesus in New England."

In "Children of Lilith," we catch a glimpse of Lilith in the countenance of Eros. Both Lilith and Eve appear in "A Vision of Woman," but no attempt is made to reconcile the irreconcilable. The Eve-Lilith conflict is the struggle between Helen of Troy and the blonde Marguerite. The desire to achieve a new synthesis of woman, dissolving the Eve-Lilith conflict, lends significance to "Dr. Faust's Descent from Heaven."

It would be necessary to play with divers combinations and permutations in order to make the grouping psychologically correct. This task is too pedantic for me. I leave it to the psycho-analysts and to the ingenuity of the reader. Perhaps I may change my mind some day when I publish my collected poems or my autobiography. Most of my books of verse are out of print. The two little volumes in the Pocket Series are the only form in which my verse is, at present, accessible.

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK.

New York, June, 1924.

## SLAVES

**N**O puppet master pulls the strings on high,  
Portioning our parts, the tinsel and the  
paint:

*A twisted nerve, a ganglion gone awry,  
Predestinates the sinner and the saint.*

*Each, held more firmly than by hempen band,  
Slave of his entrails, struts across the scene:  
The malnutrition of some obscure gland  
Makes him a Ripper or the Nazarene.*

## IRON PASSION

**L**OVE'S smiling countenance I know,  
But not the anger of the god,  
For I have wandered where Boccaccio  
And Casanova trod.

I am aweary of these pleasant things,  
The gallant dalliance and the well-watched  
fire:

Give me the magic of a thousand springs  
That shook the blood of young Assyrian kings,

That stirs the young monk in his cell, and  
stings

Crimson and hot!

Wearing the crown of unassuaged desire,  
Break me or bless me—only love me not!

Come as a wanton red with rouge and wine  
And I shall weave out of my song for thee  
A purpler cloak than his  
Who, hating, loved that Lesbia. Come to me  
A saint—the halo shall be thine  
Of Beatrice.

There is no joy in tender loves or wise,  
No sweet in wrong:  
Come unto me with cruel, loveless eyes,  
O iron passion of the lords of song!

### THE THREE SPHINXES

**B**EFORE the image older than the world,  
Or ill or good,  
By Titan hand into the desert hurled,  
In the Egyptian sunset musing stood—  
Long having travelled by fantastic roads  
Where in deep sands the tremulous footstep  
sinks—  
The oldest and the youngest of the gods,  
Saying:  
“Upon my life has fallen thy shadow,  
O Sphinx!”



Replied the Sphinx: "O son of Aphrodite,  
Shall wisdom teach thee how the soul is won,  
Or the hot sands be balsam on thy lids?  
Behold approach from Thebes and Babylon,  
Huge birds grotesque against the falling gloom,  
My far-come younger sisters." And a mighty  
Thunder of pinions shook the pyramids,  
And made the mummies mumble in their tomb.

The three stern sisters of the mystery  
Enduring and miraculously wrought  
In granite and in porphyry,  
Then, holding concourse in the desert, spake  
With the great sound of billows on the sea  
That rumble as they break:  
"Thou, Eros, art the eternal riddle, we  
Are but in stone the semblance of thy thought."

Limbed like the panther, featured like a man,  
The wisest of the Sphinxes thus began,  
That still had waited where the river steams  
And winds the caravan:  
"In my brain's cavern seven cubits span  
Dwell visions splendidous  
Of the great lords of song and thought  
and might,  
Who in the large eyes of Antinous  
Behold the Deeper Light,  
Upon my lashes gleams  
Still Shakespeare's rhythmic tear;  
Here Plato musing dreamed his dreams

Of spirit-passion; David here  
In the long night-watch sang of Jonathan."

Then rose the wingèd Theban, figure dual  
Of maid and lion strangely wed;  
"I am the blood that tingles, and the jewel  
Of all the world's desire adorns my head—  
The lithe-limbed youths that fell for Helen's  
sake

Have died for me,  
The lads that wake  
To ripeness curse me as they ache  
Beneath my tyranny.  
My mandates sweet and cruel  
Nor prayer nor penance shall revoke:  
I am the flame, men's bodies are the fuel,  
Men's souls the smoke."

The pinioned Sphinx of Babylon,  
Human in naught, Lord Eros thus addressed:  
"Wherever men have spat thy face upon  
Or sought strange pleasure in unholy quest,  
My breath had made them mad.  
I am the dream that Nero's mother had  
Ere burned his natal star.  
I am the ghastly vision of de Sade:  
Astarte and Priapus wage  
War for my beauty monstrous, barren, bare;  
The Cretan knew me and from far  
My image fell upon the crimson page  
Of Swinburne and of Baudelaire."  
The silence shivered as in tearless woe  
When they had done, the Foam-begotten broke

Across his knee the sceptre and the bow:  
"The empyrean is beyond your reach,  
Your substance earth of earth,  
And even she that called on Plato's name  
Bears soilure of a mortal birth.  
The triple mirror are you of my shame  
Half-beast are two, one wholly beast, in each  
Is something bestial, and your wings' winds  
choke  
Within my heart the unadulterate flame."

But the three Sphinxes mighty murmuring  
Thus answer made: "O Love,  
Turn thou thy wrath above,  
Where round God's throne the cosmic sunsets  
fling  
The light that shall not fade.  
Beneath his feet the countless æons roll,  
His slow relentless purpose knows the goal  
Of things, and joining flesh and spirit made  
A beast the mansion of the soul."

And lo, the spring's breath faded from Love's  
charm,  
The sunshine from his hair,  
And in his arm  
The arrows turned to rods.  
He heeded not the silent years that crawl  
Like uncouth spiders. Weary, cynical,  
Self-conscious, disenchanted stood he there.  
The oldest and the saddest of the gods.

## THE CYNIC'S CREDO

**F**ROM the cloistered halls of knowledge  
where fantastic lights are shed  
By a thousand twisted mirrors, and the dead  
entomb their dead,  
Let us walk into the city where men's wounds  
are raw and red.  
Three gifts only Life, the strumpet, holds for  
coward and for brave,  
Only three, no more—the belly and the phallus  
and the grave!

When the slow disease of time writes on our  
face its horrid scrawl,  
These be good gifts, these be real, let what will  
the rest befall,  
Both the first gift and the second—but the last  
is best of all.  
Faith and hope and friends desert us ere the  
cerecloth's folds are drawn;  
These remain while life remains and one re-  
mains when all are gone.

Who am I to judge the pander? Who are you  
to damn the thief?  
We are all but storm-tossed sailors stranded on  
the self-same reef.  
Strip us of our fine-cut garments, smite us  
with some primal grief,  
Then behold us writhing naked, chain-bound  
to our carcass, slave

To the belly and the phallus and (more kind  
than God) the grave.

Why desire the stars in heaven, why ask more  
when we have these?

Beast and bird shall be our comrades, we as  
they may live in ease.

Not for us God's angel choir and His cosmic  
silences!

Say not that we, too, are gods, since no god is  
strong to save

From the hunger of the belly and the phallus  
and the grave.

Saints and sinners all are brothers, none is  
happy while a trace

Of divine and half-forgotten distant music  
makes the race

Dream of freedom in the trap that holds the  
good man and the base.

Like the worm that eats our substance, long-  
ing eats our hearts: we crave

For a life beyond the belly and the phallus and  
the grave.

Let us nurse no vain delusion! Feast on love  
and wine and meat,

While girls' breasts blush into rosebuds and  
the touch of flesh is sweet,

For the earth, our buxom mother, loves the  
sound of dancing feet!

Though God cursed us with a glimmer of His  
consciousness He gave  
Still the belly and the phallus and life's final  
thrill—the grave!

And who knows but the Almighty in His heart  
may envy us?  
If a little draught of knowledge makes man's  
life so dolorous,  
Then the crown of His omniscience is a crown  
of thorns, and thus  
Time that ends not broods on heaven, a gigantic  
incubus.  
We at least, through evolution climbing upward  
from the cave,  
Have the belly and the phallus and God's  
kindest gift, the grave.

### THE GHOST OF OSCAR WILDE

**W**ITHIN the graveyard of Montmartre  
Where wreath on wreath is piled,  
Where Paris huddles to her breast  
Her genius like a child,  
The ghost of Heinrich Heine met  
The ghost of Oscar Wilde.

The wind was howling desolate,  
The moon's dead face shone bright;  
The ghost of Heinrich Heine hailed  
The sad wraith with delight:

"Is it the slow worm's slimy touch  
That makes you walk the night?

"Or rankles still the bitter jibe  
Of fool and Pharisee,  
When angels wept that England's law  
Had nailed you to the Tree,  
When from her brow she tore the rose  
Of golden minstrelsy?"

Then spake the ghost of Oscar Wilde  
While shrill the night hawk cried:  
"Sweet singer of the race that bare  
Him of the Wounded Side,  
(I loved them not on earth, but men  
Change somehow, having died).

"In Pere La Chaise my head is laid,  
My coffin-bed is cool,  
The mound above my grave defies  
The scorn of knave and fool,  
But may God's mercy save me from  
The Psychopathic School!

"Tight though I draw my cerecloth, still  
I hear the din thereof  
When with sharp knife and argument  
They pierce my soul above,  
Because I drew from Shakespeare's heart  
The secret of his love. . . .

"Cite not Krafft-Ebing, nor his host  
Of lepers in my aid,  
I was sufficient as God's flowers  
And everything He made;  
Yea, with the harvest of my song  
I face Him unafraid.

"The fruit of Life and Death is His;  
He shapes both core and rind . . ."  
Cracked seemed and thin the golden voice,  
(The worm to none is kind),  
While through the graveyard of Montmartre  
Despairing howled the wind.

### THE PARROT

**O** BIRD grotesque and garrulous,  
In green and scarlet liveried,  
Thy ceaseless prattle hides from us  
The secret of thy dream indeed.  
But in thine eyeball's mystic bead  
Are mirrored clear to them that read  
Vague, nameless longings, like the breed  
Of some exotic incubus.

Where is thy vision? Overseas?  
In some bright tropic far-off land  
Where chiding simians in tall trees  
Swing by luxurious breezes fanned,  
While at fantastic phallic feasts



Brown women uncouth idols hail,  
And through the forest sounds the wail  
Of the fierce matings of wild beasts?

Or are thine other memories,  
Of other lives on other trees,  
Encasements in some previous flesh  
In far-off lost existences?  
For, as the tiger leaves his spoor  
Upon the prairie, firm and sure  
Life writes itself upon the brain,  
The soul keeps count of loss and gain,  
And in the vibrant, living cells  
Of the small parrot's brain there dwells  
A sparkle of the flame benign  
That makes the human mind divine.

The self-same Life-Force fashions us:  
Its writings are the stars on high,  
Its transient mansions thou as I.  
Through Plato's mouth it speaks to us,  
Through the earth's vermin even thus.  
The heaving of a baby's breast  
And the gyrations of the sun  
To its omnipotence are one  
And make its meaning manifest.

We both are wanderers through all time  
Who, risen from the primal slime  
When God blew life into the dust,

Press to some distant goal sublime.

And often through the thin soul-crust  
Rush memories of an alien clime,  
Of gorgeous revels more robust  
Than any dream of hate or lust  
In the gilt cage upon us thrust,  
And visions strange beyond all rhyme.

The Life-Force with itself at war

Moulds and remoulds us, blood and brain,  
Yet cannot quench us out again,  
And after every change we *are*.

The soul-spark in all sentient things  
Illumes the night of death and brings,  
Remembered, immortality.

Time cannot take thy soul from thee!

All living things are one by kind,  
Heritors of the cosmic mind.  
Thus deemed the Prophet on whose knee  
The kitten slumbered peacefully,  
And surely good Saint Francis, he  
Who as his sister loved the hind.

## THE CANDLE AND THE FLAME

THY hands are like cool herbs that bring  
Balm to men's hearts, upon them laid;  
Thy lovely-petalled lips are made  
As any blossom of the spring.  
But in thine eyes there is a thing,  
O Love, that makes me half afraid.

For they are old, those eyes. . . . They  
gleam  
Between the waking and the dream  
With antique wisdom, like a bright  
Lamp strangled by the temple's veil,  
That beckons to the acolyte  
Who prays with trembling lips and pale  
In the long watches of the night.

They are as old as Life. They were  
When proud Gomorrah reared its head  
A new-born city. They were there  
When in the places of the dead  
Men swathed the body of the Lord.  
They visioned Pa-Wak raise the wall  
Of China. They saw Carthage fall  
And marked the grim Hun lead his horde.

There is no secret anywhere  
Nor any joy or shame that lies  
Not writ somehow in those child-eyes  
Of thine, O Love, in some strange wise.

Thou art the lad Endymion,  
And that great queen with spice and myrrh  
From Araby, whom Solomon  
Delighted, and the lust of her.

The legions marching from the sea  
With Cæsar's cohorts sang of thee,  
How thy fair head was more to him  
Than all the land of Italy.  
Yea, in the old days thou wert she  
Who lured Mark Antony from home  
To death and Egypt, seeing he  
Lost love when he lost Rome.

Thou saw'st old Tubal strike the lyre,  
Yea, first for thee the poet hurled  
Defiance at God's starry choir!  
Thou art the romance and the fire,  
Thou art the pageant and the strife,  
The clamour, mounting high and higher,  
From all the lovers in the world  
To all the lords of love and life.

Through thy slow slumberous long lashes  
Across the languor of thy face  
The gleam of primal passion flashes  
That is as ancient as the race,  
But we that live a little space,  
Which when beholding feel in it  
The horror of the Infinite . .

Perhaps the passions of mankind  
Are but the torches mystical  
Lit by some spirit-hand to find  
The dwelling of the Master-Mind  
That knows the secret of it all,  
In the great darkness and the wind.

We are the Candle, Love the Flame,  
Each little life-light flickers out,  
Love bides, immortally the same:  
When of life's fever we shall tire  
He will desert us, and the fire  
Rekindle new in prince or lout.

Twin-born of knowledge and of lust,  
He was before us, he shall be  
Indifferent still of thee and me,  
When shattered is life's golden cup,  
When thy young limbs are shrivelled up,  
And when my heart is turned to dust.

Nay, sweet, smile not to know at last  
That thou and I, or knave, or fool,  
Are but the involutient tool  
Of some world purpose vague and vast.  
No bar to passion's fury set,  
With monstrous poppies spice the wine:  
For only drunk are we divine,  
And only mad shall we forget!

## A BALLAD OF KING DAVID

AS David with Bath-Sheba lay,  
Both drunk with kisses long denied,  
The King, with quaking lips and gray,  
Beheld a spectre at his side  
That said no word nor went away.

Then to his leman spake the King,  
The ghostly presence challenging:  
"Bath-Sheba, erst Uriah's wife,  
Thy lips are as the Cup of Life  
That holds the purplest wine of God,  
Too sweet for any underling."

"Yet," spake Bath-Sheba, sad of mien,  
"Why from thy visage went the sheen  
As though thy troubled eye had seen  
A shadow, like a dead man's curse,  
Rise threatening from the mound terrene?"

"'Twas but the falling dusk, that fills  
The palace with fantastic ills.  
Uriah sleeps in alien sands  
Soundly. 'Tis not his ghost that stands,  
Living or dead, or anything  
'Twixt the King's pleasure and the King."  
Bath-Sheba's glad heart rose, then fell:  
"Where is it that thy fancies dwell?  
Is there some maid in Israel  
Broad-hipped, with green eyes like the sea,

Whose mouth is like a honey-cell,  
And sweeter than the mouth of me?"

"The pressure of thy lips on mine  
Is exquisite like snow-cooled wine.  
Over the wasteness of my life

Thy love is risen like a sun:  
All other loves that once seemed sweet  
Are seized by black oblivion."

Again upon the shadow-thing  
He gazed in silence, questioning.  
And lo! with quaint familiar ring  
A spectral voice addressed the King:

"O David, David, Judah's swan!  
Why unto me dost thou this thing?"

"Who art thou?" "I am Jonathan,  
My heart is like a wounded fawn.

"When Saul's fierce anger, like a bull,  
Rose, by the Evil One made blind,

My love to thee was wonderful,  
Passing the love of womankind.

Hast thou forgotten everything  
My heart aches in remembering?  
Is such the harvest of our spring  
Of war and love and lute-playing?"

Was it a ghost's voice or the wind?

For still Bath-Sheba, unaware,  
Smiled. But King David ill in mind  
Scarce deemed her Beauty half so fair:

"Stale is the wine this evening,  
And sick with roses is the air!"  
He tore the garland from his hair,  
And left Bath-Sheba lying there  
Perturbed, and vaguely wondering . . .

## BENEDICTION

**S**PRING'S blessing be upon you, dear!  
Such is the prayer most meet for one  
Whose eyes look up so starry-clear—  
With all his flowerets new-begun  
Still may he bless your pathway, dear,  
Who weaves his golden threads around  
Your heart and mine together bound:  
Because your eyes are starry-clear—  
Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child,  
When all the earth with longing swells,  
And lilies ring their silver bells  
For joy that he is nigh,  
And open wide, their lord to greet,  
Adoring humbly at his feet  
(Ah, spring has come, and spring is sweet!)  
Their inmost pageantry,  
And all the earth with love is wild—  
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child,  
And may the song of nightingales



Re-echo from the wooded dales—  
Like women's arms so soft and mild,  
And as deep crimson roses wild,  
    (Such is the song of the nightingales,  
    And sad as tears of one that wails  
Where love's high temple is defiled);  
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

Spring's blessing be upon your ways,  
Before in life's distracting maze  
We fall on hopeless evil days!

True, summer comes more richly warm  
And fraught with wilder passion's storm  
    Of torturing blisses;  
But golden gleams spring's youthful form,  
    More sweet his kisses;  
Soft breezes sing his roundelays—  
Spring's blessing be upon your ways!

Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!  
His hair is decked with flowery cheer;  
    Upon his brow the diadem  
    Shines out by right of youth immortal;  
His might brings glad release to them  
    That were condemned without the portal  
Of hope to live in sickening fear;  
Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child!  
And never may the wine-cup hold  
    One drop of bitter questioning.

May Death in spring-time find you, child—  
But Love shall toss his locks of gold  
And make all life an endless spring,  
And fate and he be reconciled:  
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

### SPRING

*For Peter Pan*

**S**PRING came carolling through the land,  
Roses and laughter on every hand;  
But I was gazing with steadfast eye  
Where Christ was nailed on high.

Hawthorn blossoms were white and gay,  
Promise of fruit in the laden spray—  
Only the tree of the Cross bare naught  
Save the ruin that death had wrought!

Spring passed on, and a breath of bloom  
Swept through the casement, filled the room.  
I cried in a sudden agony:  
"Lord Jesus, set me free!

"See, I am young, and the blood is hot,  
Longing for what I compass not—  
Love, and sunshine, and fond delight  
In beauty warm and white.

"Lord, Thy Cross is a heavy load,  
Thorny and steep the upward road—  
Lord, from the woods astir I hear  
Laughter and joyous cheer.

"Far be it from me, Lord, to scorn  
The bitter anguish that Thou hast borne:  
But redder his mouth in its youthful pride  
Than the spear-wound in Thy side!

"Ah, see how his hair like soft-spun gold  
Falls curling over his raiment's fold,  
And his laughing eyes look out with glee  
The great wide world to see!

"I thrill at his music silvery sweet,  
And I long to follow his dancing feet:  
For lo! where they fall the flowers are  
born—  
And hearts no more forlorn!

"My soul goes out to him since the hour  
He passed me by in his winsome power,  
And my blood is stirred by his witchery—  
Prince Jesus, set me free!"

Bowed to my prayer the wounded Head,  
Died in the west the sunset red—  
And a slow, slow drop of blood ran down  
From under the thorny crown.

Strange, in the years that have gone, the Cross  
Had grown so dear to me that its loss  
Went to my heart with a thrill of pain—  
I had half turned back again!

O sweet Lord Spring, I am free at last  
To follow wherever thy feet have passed,  
Over the dales and over the rills  
To the gladsome Grecian hills!

### A VISION OF MAN

**T**HE proud free glance, the thinker's mighty  
brow,  
The curling locks and supple, slender limbs,  
The eye that speaks dominion, victor's smile—  
All these I know. By them I hail thee Man,  
Lord of the earth. Thou art the woman's slave,  
And yet her master . . .

I know thee when about thy sunburnt thighs  
Thou swing'st the tawny skin a tiger wore  
Till thy rude weapon dashed him to the ground.  
I know thee also when thy shoulders bear  
The purple mantle of an emperor,  
Stained with the blood of thousand tiny lives;  
The golden sandals clasped upon thy feet;  
Thy hair made rich with spikenard, and thy  
brow  
Graced with the gifts that mutual east and  
west  
Conspire to offer to their sovereign lord.

I know thee too in lust's relentless rage,  
Dragging the chosen woman to thy lair,  
To frame upon her body at thy will  
Sons in thine image, strong of loin as thou:

And when, the bearer of thy father's sins,  
Within the portals of the House of Shame  
Monstrous delight thy passion seeks to find  
In futile quest, and Nature pitiful  
Will not transmit unto the future's womb  
Thy weakened generation . . .

Image of God I know thee—God thyself.  
Walking the world on India's sun-parched  
plains

Thy name was Rama; thou in desert sands  
Of Araby didst dream thy wondrous dream;  
The cradles of all races thou hast seen—  
Thou Zarathustra—thou the Son of Man!  
I know the wounds of hands and feet and  
side . . .

Ah, and I know the ring about thy neck  
Of ruddy curls! Say, Judas, in thine ear  
Make they sweet music still, the silver coins,  
As on the day the temple's veil was rent?

So, in the far-stretched background of all time  
I watch thy progress through the sounding  
years—

Wielding the sceptre here, and there the lyre,  
The lord or servant of thy master-passion,  
Pure or polluted, fool or nobly wise.

And this it is that justifies the whole,  
This is thy greatness: thou hast stumbled oft,  
And straying often fallen. Yet all the while,  
Wandering the stony wilderness of life,  
Thine eyes were fixed upon the steadfast star

That far-off stands above the Promised Land.  
Rough is the road, beset by mocking heavens  
And false illusory hells—the strong, the weak  
Alike by dancing fires are led astray,  
And poisoned flowers bloom rankly on the  
path.

Self in the guise of selfishness approached,  
Frailty in garment of a god benign;  
Pleasure with lying accents "I am sin"  
Proclaimed, and vice, "I am bold action" cried;  
"I am contentment," spoke the belly full,  
And the applause of groundlings, "I am fame."

And so it came that only here and there  
In all the years a strong, unerring one  
Plucked boldly at the flowers of brief delight,  
Yet by the dust of tumult unconfused  
Pressed on to reach the goal; the strong man's  
goal:

To rule and to enjoy, to hold command  
Over both things and spirits, to enjoy  
All pleasant sounds and all sweet gifts, yet  
strive

Untiring, ever upward to that sun  
Which no world-master's blind despotic will,  
But his own hand, with more than Titan  
strength,

Unto the utmost firmament has flung.

## INHIBITION

*To My Parents*

O FOR the blithesomeness of birds  
Whose soul floods ever to their tongue!  
But to be impotent of words

With blinding tears and heart unstrung!

Each breeze that blows from homeward brings  
To me who am so far away

The memory of tender things

I might have said and did not say.

Like spirit children, wraiths unborn

To luckless lovers long ago,

Shades of emotion, mute, forlorn,

Within my brain stalk to and fro.

When to my lips they rush, and call,

A nameless something rears its head,

Forbidding, like the spectral wall

Between the living and the dead.

O guardian of the nether mind

Where atavistic terrors reel

In dark cerebral chambers bind

Old nightmares with thy mystic seal!

But bar not from the sonant gate

Of being with thy fiery sword

The sweetest thing we wring from fate:

Love's one imperishable word!

## THE PROTOZOAN

*(A Chant of Immortality)*

NO torches light the tragic night  
In which I grope,  
Friend have I none under the sun,  
Nor hope.

Heedless I press past deeds that bless  
And deeds that damn.  
For I know this, that while Life is,  
I am.

Beholding me, the Fateful Three  
Ironies chortle.  
Creeds are a sham. Gods die. I am  
Immortal.

The pristine cell wherein I dwell  
Outlasts the stars,  
Renewing life 'spite cosmic strife  
And scars.

Through pain and fear I persevere  
Upreared from sod  
And primal slime, to challenge Time  
And God.



## THE PLAINT OF EVE

**M**AN'S mate was I in Paradise,  
Since of the fruit we twain did eat,  
Through the slow toiling days his slave.  
~~Because~~ I asked for truth, God gave  
All the world's anguish and the grave.  
~~But~~, being merciful and wise,  
He bade His angel bathe mine eyes  
With the salt dew of sorrow. Sweet  
Had ~~been~~ the dew of Paradise."

*Yet through the immemorial years,  
Has she not healed us with her tears?*

"Albeit upon my lips I wore  
A smile, my heart was ever sore.  
Because I heard the Serpent hiss,  
Therefore I suffered patiently.  
But now I pray for bread, and ye  
Gave me a stone or worse—a kiss."

*Shall not the stone rebound on us?  
Shall not the kiss prove venomous?*

"No expiation dearly won,  
Can turn the ancient loss to gain,  
The Son of Man was Mary's Son . . .  
Have I not borne the child in pain?  
My sighs were mingled with His breaths!

Yet, though I died a thousand deaths,  
A thousand times a thousandfold,  
With Him, my babe, upon the Cross,  
My bloody sweats are never told,  
And still the world's gain is my loss."

*Has she not suffered, has not died,  
With every creature crucified?*

"The hallowed light of Mary's eyes  
Within my bosom never dies.

The learned Faust, for all his pride,  
Was saved by Gretchen—glorified—

To God, his master, thrice denied.  
Love's smallest holy offices  
When have I shirked them, even these?  
From the grey dawn when time began  
To the Crimean battle-field.

By every wounded soldier's side  
With cool and soothing hands I kneeled."

*She is the good Samaritan  
Upon life's every battle-field.*

"The secret book of Beauty was  
Unlocked through me to Phidias.  
Petrarcha's dream and Raphael's,  
Rossetti's blessèd damozels,

And all men's visions live in me.  
The shadow queens of Maeterlinck,  
Clothed with my soft flesh, cross the brink  
Of utter unreality.

Rautendelein and Juliet,  
Who shall their wistful smile fogret?  
The leader of my boyish band  
I rule in Neverneverland."

*Her's is the sweetest voice in France,  
And hers the sob that like a lance  
Has pierced the heart of Italy.*

"With stylus, brush and angelot,  
I seize life's pulses, fierce and hot.  
In Greece, a suzerain of song,  
The swallow was my singing mate,  
My lyric sisters still prolong  
My strain more strange than sea or fate.  
Though Shakespeare's sonnets, sweet as wine,  
Were not more 'sugared' than were mine,  
Ye who with myrtle crown my brow,  
Withhold the laurel even now."

*The world's intolerable scorn  
Still falls to every woman born*

"Strong to inspire, strong to please,  
My love was unto Pericles;  
The Corsican, the demigod  
Whose feet upon the nations trod,  
Shrunk from my wit as from a rod.  
The number and its secret train  
Eluded not my restless brain.  
Beyond the ken of man I saw,

With Colon's eyes, America.

Into the heart of mystery,  
Of light and earth I plunged, to me  
The atom bared its perfect plot."

*What gifts have we, that she has not?*

"Was I not lord of life and death  
In Egypt and in Nineveh?

Clothed with Saint Stephen's majesty  
My arm dealt justice mightily.  
Men that beheld me caught their breath  
With awe. I was Elizabeth.  
I was the Maid of God. Mine was  
The sway of all the Russias.  
What was my guerdon, mine to take?  
A crown of slander, and the stake!"

*How shall we comfort her, how ease  
The pain of thousand centuries?*

"Back from my aspiration hurled,  
I was the harlot of the world.  
The levelled walls of Troy confess  
My devastating loveliness.  
Upon my bosom burns the scar  
Eternal as the sexes are.

I was Prince Borgia's concubine,  
Phryne I was, and Messaline,  
And Circe, who turned men to swine."

*But shall they be forgotten, then,  
Whom she has turned from swine to men?*

"New creeds unto the world I gave,  
But my own self I could not save.  
For all mankind one Christ has sighed  
Upon the Cross, but hourly  
Is every woman crucified!  
The iron stake of destiny  
Is plunged into my living side.  
To Him that died upon the Tree  
Love held out trembling hands to lend  
Its reverential ministry,  
And then came Death, the kindest friend—  
Shall my long road to Calvary,  
And man's injustice, have no end?"

*O sons of mothers, shall the pain  
Of all child-bearing be in vain?  
Shall we drive nails, to wound her thus,  
Into the hands that fondled us?*

## THE CONQUEROR

*"I, John Pierpont Morgan,  
... commit my soul into the  
hands of my Savior, in full con-  
fidence that having redeemed  
and washed it in His most pre-  
cious blood He will present it  
faultless before the throne of  
my Heavenly Father."*

*—The Last Will and Testa-  
ment of John Pierpont Morgan.*

**W**HEN all was silent and the gloom  
Grew thick, the dead man rose. The  
mask

Slipped. Loath to tarry in the room,  
He glanced not at the agate casque;

Nor at his tapestries, his scrolls,  
The ransom of an hundred kings—  
For he that conquers life, his soul's  
Wraith is not chained to mundane things.

His cane with slow, deliberate care  
Swinging, along the street moved he,  
Until he reached the Golden Stair  
That only dead men's eyes may see.

Of newly dead a spirit host  
Made low obeisance when he came.  
Though some be saved and some be lost,  
He was the Master of the Game

In life and death. A grunt, a nod,  
Thanked them. They nudged each other's  
sides

For each was fettered to the sod  
By some earth memory. A bride's

Caress. A lad's clean limbs. The sheen  
In a child's face. A battle won.  
A crime. A dream. What might have been.  
—August, untroubled he passed on.

He puffed at his cigar. The spheres  
Made music. Then the ceaseless drone  
Of prayer went up. By myriad tiers  
Encircled rose the Holy Throne.

With no uncertainty of fate  
He brushed aside the angel throng  
And strode through the emblazoned gate  
Into the Heaven of the Strong.

### THE WINNERS

*To my Wife,  
Margaret Edith Viereck.*

**N**EVER on the winning side,  
Always on the right—  
Vanquished, this shall be our pride  
In the world's despite.

Let the oily Pharisees  
Purse their lips and rant,

Calm we face the Destinies:  
Better "can't" than Cant.

Bravely drain, then fling away,  
Break the cup of sorrow!  
Courage! He who lost the day  
May have won the morrow.

### JESUS IN NEW ENGLAND

**H**E saw the drab and dreary town  
Upon the mirthless Sabbath day;  
All pleasant things had crept away  
Like serfs before the master's frown;  
The very trees their heads hung down  
Upon the mirthless Sabbath day.

Through joy-deserted streets He trod,  
The church bells tolling mournfully.  
There was no sound of childish glee,  
No peal of laughter praising God  
Hailed Him that loved the little ones  
From Judah unto Galilee.

Barred in His name the magic bower  
Of mimic kings and queens that seem,  
Where still the fairy-jewels gleam,  
And sonant for a little hour—  
From faded parchment conjured up  
Incarnate walks the poet's dream.



But through a gate obscure and small  
He watched a pale-faced stripling crawl  
    Into a closely-shuttered place  
    Where Magdalens untouched of grace  
Held their unlovely festival,  
    Wearing the hunted look, uncanny,  
    Of them that love not much but many.

And right across the house of guilt  
Where sweet young lips were made all-wise  
    In unchaste knowledge, and the wine  
Of glorious youth was hourly spilt—  
    Grinning upon Him like a skull,  
With windows bare like sightless eyes,  
    There rose the House Unbeautiful  
Wherein God's holy shrine was built.

And buzzing like a swarm of bees  
    Around the church's open door,  
In long frock coats and tall silk hats,  
The sleek, the oily Pharisees  
    With the complacent smile of yore—  
Dear God, how He remembered these!

Upon a cross of ebony  
    He saw His image painted bleak  
    With pallid lips that seemed to speak;  
"My God, thou hast forsaken me!"  
    Such was the symbol of their faith—  
    Not like a godhead, like a wraith  
Convulsed with futile agony,  
    Wherefrom no man might solace seek.

There was no incense in the air,  
Never a sweet-faced acolyte,  
No priest in sacrificial dress  
Trailing with colors strange and bright;  
No organ sounded pæans there,  
No candelabrum shed its light.  
No gleam of hope . . . of loveliness,  
Of awe . . . or beauty anywhere.

Beside the tabernacle stood,  
Choked with things hateful that destroy,  
A weazened parson cursing Joy;  
And in his veins there flowed no blood.  
Upon his tongue were words of grace,  
Yet every time he spake afresh  
He drove a nail into His flesh,  
And praying . . . spat into His face!

And, while his curses poured like showers  
Upon all things that men hold fair:  
The pearls, the satin and the flowers,  
Life's graces, perfumed, debonair,  
With voice of thunder spake the Master:  
"Hold, parson! Cease thy blasphemy!"  
"Who art thou, stranger "

"I am He

*Who suffered her of Magdala  
With the smooth satin of her hair  
To dry His consecrated feet,  
And break for Him the alabaster  
That held the spikenard rare and sweet."*

The weazened parson deaf and blind  
Proceeded of God's wrath to tell,  
And of a lad, of one who fell  
Through his hot blood and fates unkind,  
Whom to the terrors of God's Hell  
And to His vengeance he consigned.  
Again the voice rose threateningly:  
*"Hold, parson! Cease thy blasphemy!"*  
*"Who art thou, stranger?"*

*"I am He*  
*Who in the wilderness forsaken,*  
*Plucked from His flesh temptation's spur,*  
*Forgave one in adultery taken*  
*And bade ye throw no stone at her!"*

And still the parson cursed and whined,  
And thus he spoke to womankind:

*"Vileness and sin of every shape*  
*Lure in the ferment of the grape.*  
*Seize by the root the fruit malign*  
*'That turns all good men into swine!'"*  
*"Impious parson, on thy knee!*  
*How dare ye judge your Maker? He*  
*Am I who at His mother's sign,*  
*And for her glory, turned the water*  
*In the six water-pots to wine!*

*"I am who through the bigot pride*  
*Of righteous fools is crucified.*  
*All lovely things, if these be slain,*  
*Then were My sacrifice in vain!*

*For man is not the devil's booty,  
Not mine the scorpion and the rod,  
Not sorrow is your heavy duty,  
And they that worship Him in beauty  
And gladness . . . are most dear to God.*

*"Men of the New World, heed Me, bliss  
And all God's good gifts are your gain!  
From Old World nightmares cleanse your  
brain:*

*Columbus has not cross the main  
To open up new worlds to pain!  
But he and they who tell you this,  
Good folk, betray you with a prayer  
As they betrayed Me with a kiss!"*

*And like mysterious music died  
His accents on the shivering air;  
And through the heavens opening wide  
He vanished where no man might follow.*

*Roses for thorns were in His hair,  
And on His visage, dwelling there,  
Those who beheld Him saw, enticed,  
The awful beauty of Apollo,  
The loving kindness which is Christ.*

*But choked with visions that destroy,  
Still by the cross the parson stood,  
A gibbering madman cursing Joy! . . .*

## THE BALLAD OF THE GOLDEN BOY

**D**A VINCI'S brow in curious lines  
Of contemplation deep was knit.  
Fair dreams before his eyes alit  
Like water when the moonlight shines,  
Or amber bees that come and flit:  
How to make rare and exquisite  
A pageant for the Florentines.

He beckoned to his page, a lad  
Whose lips were like two crimson spots,  
Eyes had he like forget-me-nots.  
Yet all his boyhood sweet and glad  
In frock of homely-spun was clad.

And of his multi-colored whims  
The strangest thus the master told:  
"Child, I shall crown thy head with gold,  
And stain with gold thy lovely limbs.  
For once in this sad age uncouth  
The bloom of boyhood and of youth  
Shall be with splendour aureoled."

The boy's heart leaped in one great bound.  
"Thy gracious will," said he, "be done!"  
And ere the lad was disengowned  
The eager painter had begun  
To clothe his hair with glory round  
And make his visage like the sun.

Then, seven stars upon his breast,  
And in his hands a floral horn,  
Like a young king or like a guest  
From heaven, riding on the morn,  
Splendid and nude, the boy was borne  
In triumph on the pageant's crest.

Like the sea surging on the beach,  
Reverberant murmurs rise to greet  
The masqueraders on the street.  
But what is this? A learned leech  
Hatless, dishevelled, runs to meet  
The train. White terror halts his speech

"Poor lad, my lad, for Heaven's pity,"  
Shakes on the air a father's cry,  
"Strip from thy flesh this gilded lie,  
Else, for the pleasure of the city,  
A self-slain Midas, thou must die!"

And terror smote the revelry.  
The master's features white and sad  
Twitched, yet no single word spake he,  
But full and straight rose up the lad,  
Upon his lips curled wistfully  
The smile that Mona Lisa had.

"Good Sir," said he, "what mortal power  
In all the dark-winged years and fleet,  
Could me, a lowly lad, endower  
With any boon more great, more sweet,

Than to have felt one epic hour  
A city's homage at my feet?

"By the slow tooth of time uneaten,  
And all the foul things that destroy,  
From Life's mad game I rise unbeaten,  
Drenched with the wine of youth and joy,  
Great Leonardo's Golden Boy.

"Let this be told in song and story,  
Until the eyes of the world grow dim,  
Till the sun's rays are wan, and hoary  
The ringlets of the cherubim,  
That in my boyhood's glow and glory  
I died for Florence and for him.

"And when the damp and dreary mould  
Full soon my little limbs shall hold,  
Let Leonardo's finger write  
Upon my grave, in letters bold:  
*'His life was as a splash of gold  
Against the plumage of the night.'*"

Thus spake the lad; and onward rolled  
The world's great pageant fierce and bright.

## THE MAGIC CITY

WHO knows where Babylon's forgotten  
kings

Now keep their state?  
Laid to their rest 'neath purple coverings,  
They meet the common fate.

No traces that abide  
Of all the Christs who bled upon the Cross  
Ere Jesus died,  
And by the Ganges sought the gain of loss:  
Behold their priestly mantle's dye  
Has faded, and their day gone by.

The witching girls with eyes so crystal-clear  
And honeyed tresses bright,  
Full many a fool's delight  
And his heart's all:

These with the snows of yester-year  
Not Villon's cry shall wake to light—  
Asleep beyond recall.

The tables of the law are broken;  
The flocks are feeding on the grass that  
grows

About each sculptured token  
Of ancient empire, and the wild wind blows  
Yet, though the spell of death and ruin lord  
The earth, above all mortal woes



Deathless triumphant sounds the poet's word,  
Clothed with thought's flame, and through  
the storm-fraught night.  
Blazes like a mighty sword  
Leaping to the fight.

Through the clang of battle, and the crash  
Of worlds that to destruction fall,  
Song rings out like silver trumpets' call,  
Or, heard through all,  
Harmonious still, great chords consenting clash.

Never is melody silent on earth;  
Faint, far-away, but forever rings the sound of  
its mirth,  
Not even the sun is eternal, but immortal, O  
Homer, thy birth!

And still the listening years  
Repeat her lyric name,  
Who wove song's deathless garland from her  
tears  
And from her shame.

And raised by music's might  
—High walls in battlemented line—  
A magic city dawns before my sight:  
Golden temples rear their haughty heads  
on high  
Domes like new suns blazing seem to span  
the sky.

I enter in, and straying stand at length  
Amazed before a vast cathedral's door.  
Immense it rises there, in conscious strength  
That many a tempest bore.

On the threshold swift I pause:  
Sound of ghostly footsteps awes  
My eager feet that would an entrance  
win,  
Bids me kneel and murmur low  
Prayers of reverence, as I know  
What holy thoughts, what wisdom dwell  
therein.

This is the home of high Teutonic speech  
Where beauty's sacred fire forever glows.  
Upon the Edda's broad foundation rose  
The soaring columns vaulted each to each,  
And Goethe, Shakespeare, Ibsen reach  
Their spans cross the hall:  
And over all  
A dome that holds the light,  
The Master-Man, whose message mystical  
Bade us be bold and laugh and seize  
delight,  
Before he vanished into endless night  
At Zarathustra's call!

Of song is made the painted windows' sheen,  
The lustre of the lamps,  
The tapestries shot with gold:

On each his own design some singer stamps,  
The very stones have voices, that proclaim

The Magic City and uphold  
Her deathless fame.

The Holy of Holies is this place:  
Some hanging that the wall may grace  
To weave with care,  
Or with the smoking censer pace,  
Or do least service in that blessed throng,  
Is to claim kinship with God's saints and wear  
The martyr's crown of song.

### THE CHALLENGE

**I** CHALLENGE you!" you said to me  
The curtain parts. You enter in.  
A dream of pink and ivory  
Through the soft satin peeps your skin

Before me, in defiance bold,  
Now all your little being stands.  
Your breasts like two small birds I hold—  
I feel their heart-beats with my hands

But in your eyes there is no dread:  
A little animal at play  
You cuddle up within my bed,  
And simply will not go away.

Perhaps some sober Puritan  
Would take your tender ways amiss,  
I am not marble, but a man—  
Worlds have been bartered for a kiss.

And though but now your hand and eye  
Upon forbidden ways have strayed,  
Against the damask sheet you lie  
More like a flower than a maid.

How white are you, how brown am I,  
My lily girl! My midnight rose!  
How delicate against my thigh  
Is the indenture of your toes.

No after-savors mar your lips  
With memories of past delight,  
Save phantom lads who come on ships  
Of dreams to little girls at night.

A thornless rose of memory  
Shall be this strange night's white caress.  
My love with you deals tenderly,  
And life, I pray will do no less.

"Is this not love's way, even so?"  
You ask and smile triumphantly,  
And know not that still home you go  
With all your young virginity.

Scat, little kitten, nor delay,  
While there, as yet, is naught to rue!

The city swarms with beasts of prey  
Who lie in wait for such as you.

Avaunt, incredible gamin!

You have no right at all to be,  
Save in the sculptures of Rodin,  
Or else—in Greek mythology.

### THE PILGRIM

**T**HERE knocked One nightly at the harlot's  
house;

Wan was His mouth as kisses without love.  
His groping fingers followed tremulous  
The winding of her delicate thin veins;  
He traced the waxen contour of her breast,  
And then, as baffled in some strange pursuit,  
Drew her to Him in weariest embrace;  
And, as she shuddered in His grasp, He  
watched,

Still passionless, the working of her throat.  
The woman's cheek grew crimson as He gazed,  
But He, a scowling and disgruntled guest,  
Rose white and famished from her body's feast.  
Yet one night, pausing half-way, He turned  
back,

Lured by the wraith of long-departed hope;  
And then He asked of her a monstrous thing.  
The strumpet blanched and, rising from the  
couch,

Spat in His face.

Straightway the Stranger's eye  
Blazoned exultant with the pilgrim's joy  
When ends the quest. He lifted up His hands  
In quiet benediction, and a light  
Miraculous upon His forehead shone.  
But she, being blind, still cursed Him, and  
reviled:

"Albeit I sell my body for very shame  
I am a woman, not a beast; but thou——"  
"And I," quoth he, "a Seeker after God . . ."

### ATTAR OF SONG

**L**IKE Lilith, mother Lilith, I have wound  
About my heart the serpent of desire.

A purple galleon on a sea of fire  
Has borne my footsteps to forbidden ground,  
Where glittering with corruption of all time,  
Death in its shadow, dreams the Upas tree;  
But with its dew, as sugar sucks the bee,  
I have enriched the honeycomb of rhyme.

A riot of strange roses is my life—  
Pale as Narcissus gazing wistfully,  
And crimson red as the great Rose of Strife  
Upon the zone of Menelaus' wife,—  
Distilled by love with lyric alchemy,  
Heart of my heart, into one song for thee.

## THE BURIED CITY

**M**Y heart is like a city of the gay  
Reared on the ruins of a perished one,  
Wherein my dead loves cower from the sun,  
White-swathed like kings, the Pharaohs of a  
day.

Within the buried city stirs no sound  
Save for the bat, forgetful of the rod,  
Perched on the knee of some deserted god,  
And for the groan of rivers underground.

Stray not, my Love, 'mid the sarcophagi,  
Tempt not the silence . . . for the fates are  
deep,

Lest all the dreamers deeming doomsday nigh  
Leap forth in terror from their haunted  
sleep;

And, like the peal of an accursèd bell,  
Thy voice call ghosts of dead things back from  
hell!

## TRIUMPHATRIX

**A**S some great monarch in triumphal train  
Holds in his thrall an hundred captive  
kings,

Guard thou the loves of all my vanished  
springs  
To wait as handmaids on thy sweet disdain.  
And thou shalt wear their tresses like bright  
rings,

For their defeat perpetuates thy reign!  
With thy imperious girlhood vie in vain  
The pallid hosts of all old poignant things.

Place on thy brow the mystic diadem  
With women's faces cunningly embossed,  
Whereon each memory glitters like a gem;  
But mark that mine were regal loves that  
lost  
And loved like queens, nor haggled for the  
cost—  
And having conquered, oh be kind to them!

### AT NIGHTFALL

**S**WEET is the highroad when the skylarks  
call,

When we and Love go rambling through the  
land.

But shall we still walk gaily hand in hand  
At the road's turning and the twilight's fall?

Then darkness shall divide us like a wall,  
And uncouth evil nightbirds flap their wings;  
The solitude of all created things  
Will creep upon us shuddering like a pall.

This is the knowledge I have wrung from pain:  
We, yea, all lovers, are not one, but twain,

Each by strange wisps to strange abysses  
drawn.

But through the black immensity of night  
Love's little lantern, as a glow-worm's bright,  
May lead our steps to some stupendous dawn.



## FINALE

**H**OW changed the house is when not Love  
is there!

Your deep eyes vex me like some magic book  
I cannot ponder. Nay, I will not brook  
The weariness of your too golden hair!  
Hush! Was not that the creaking of a stair?  
Was it Love's footfall or the wind? I look  
In vain for him in every hidden nook—  
There is no sound of laughter anywhere . . .

Ah, sweet, he has forsaken us, not base,  
But heedless, boyish—and the world is wide!  
He sees not now your sorrow-haunted face,  
Nor feels the dagger that has pierced my  
side,  
And how all joy is vanished from the place  
As from a house in which a child has died.

## THE LOVE SEAL

**A** SILVER sea beneath the stars—  
We paid to love his mystic rites,  
And from thy lips I kissed the scars  
Of fiercer joys and stranger nights.

What redder lips, what mouth of fate,  
Till Buddha noddeth near the goal,  
Shall, stronger still, obliterate  
My one night's madness from thy soul?

I brand thee through eternity,  
Upon thy blood I set my seal,  
And boy and girl and change and sea  
Cannot wipe out my mark or heal.

While the great life-snake sheds its coat,  
I must rehearse my tragic part,  
To kiss the love-wounds from thy throat,  
And burn the iron in thy—heart.

### RESPIRE

*(For M. E. V.)*

I SHALL not, dead, miss love's sublimities,  
The pageantry, the passion, and the smart,  
But only this, the sweet proximities  
Of flesh to flesh, of heart-beat to the heart.

I shall not, dead, remember anything,  
The sun, the moon, the waters, and the lands,  
The wild adventure of my journeying:  
Only the weary flutter of white hands.

Let earth the maggot feed upon my brain,  
Let me forget the rime, the rune, the rose,  
If but this vision to the end remain:  
A little body, birdlike, nestling close.

Of all God's deeds the foulest deed is this:  
Though my heart aches, though all my man-  
hood squirms,

When I am dead, your touch, your mouth, your  
kiss

Dear Love, will seem no sweeter than the  
worm's.

For hearts and worms and lovers' ecstasy  
To life's Mad Master, on invention bent,  
Are but the ashes of his alchemy  
That he discards in his experiment.

There is no lodestar in this lonely sea,  
No ghost of any harbor for my quest,  
Save Love's eyes shining tenderly,  
Save for the respite of your breast,  
And—maybe—rest.

## DR. FAUST'S DESCENT FROM HEAVEN

### I

**T**HOUGH your womb be the mother of bliss,  
O Earth, and the mother of woes,  
Though your large hands be full of the strange  
gifts of life, the kiss, and the worm, and  
the rose,

The thunders that break from the sky of fate,  
and the flash in the pan,

To me they are empty, for I know all things  
encompassed of man.

The devious desires that crouch through the  
brain like monsters that nest in the sea,  
Pass—pageants of ghosts—through the lumin-  
ous eyes of one who is dear to me.

The other—all pangs and delights of the visible  
world and its quests,  
Are engraved in the exquisite curve of her  
throat and the hieroglyphs of her breasts.  
One rides on the wingèd chimaera of dreams  
through aeons purple and red,  
The other—like new-mown grass is the scent  
of her flesh in my bed.  
What can you give me of joy, Earth, what of  
bitter and sweet?  
*I have loved Helen of Troy and the blonde Mar-  
guerite.*

## II

Straightforth with the Magical Seal I knocked  
at the musical gates  
Of Heaven. The angels grew pale, or swooned  
in the arms of their mates.  
“I have sounded all chords in the harp of man’s  
life,” I said,  
“It is I, Doctor Faust. Now give me your man-  
na for bread.”  
And they gave me their manna to eat, and  
drink, and I drank thereof,  
But they tasted as ashes and stale in my mouth  
after the kisses of love.  
So I spake up to God: “In your realm, O Lord,  
there is nothing to do  
For a man such as I. Let me pass. T’were dif-  
ferent if I could be you!  
To play with omnipotence, curb lightnings, and  
summon new worlds at my will—

Yet I stretch out no impious hand for your  
kingdom. I, too, have my fill.  
Though the suns be your toy, of Love's breasts  
have I joy, though the prayer of the  
saints be your meat,  
*Have you loved Helen of Troy and the blonde  
Marguerite?"*

## III

Into Inferno I stalked to the stream where sulphur and brimstone well  
Through lonelinesses more deep than the Florentine's Frozen Hell.  
I came to the nethermost place where Satan sate in splendor alone,  
The writhing limbs of anguished men were the pillars of his throne.  
His court was paved with dead men's hopes stamped like designs into mud,  
From thousand scarlet candles came the drip of human blood.  
In his eyes were all the tortures of all nights barren and fever-tossed  
Of all who loved and won and all who loved and lost.  
And I grasped the hand of the Prince of Hell:  
"O brother once divine,  
Lo, all your thorns have pierced my side and all your hells were mine.  
Thorns of flame that destroy, remorse, with slow but infallible feet:

*I have loved Helen of Troy and the blonde Marguerite."*

## IV

From the lesser gods to their masters, Time  
and Eternity,

I turned—to crave the single boon that they  
could give to me.

"I am the Pilgrim of Passion who ever must  
choose and grieve

Between the earth-born daughters of Lilith and  
of Eve.

For I have lost my way twixt Heaven and Hell  
and Earth,

Give me oblivion," I said, "or grant me another  
birth!

Grant me another encasement where the flesh  
shall be the soul,

Where good shall be as evil and pole as anti-  
pole.

Let Lilith and her sister, both back into night  
be thrust,

Fashion Woman anew out of their astral dust.  
Dreams of impossible joy and impossible love-  
liness meet

*When beautiful Helen of Troy shall be one  
with the blonde Marguerite."*

## MAN TO HIS MAKER

FROM the white ulcer of thy snow,  
From the green leprosy of spring,  
Preserve us, Lord, whose mercies sting,  
Whose loaded dice win every throw.

Foredoomed to perish in the strife  
With maggots fattened by thy breath,  
Free us from life's mad lover—death,  
And save us from death's nightmare—life.

Blind microscopic molluscs we,  
Beneath thy scorn that spawn and squirm,  
Redeem us from thy gloating worm  
And from the consciousness of thee.

If play we must this sorry role  
For thy amusement, spare the cant:  
Make man equal of the ant,  
Celestial Sadist! Take the soul.

And crush us back into the sod,  
Whose fate is futile utterly,  
Save as a prank of destiny  
Played by a bored and bilious god.

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 (Note: In the operatic titles listed below, Mr. Theo. M. R. von Keler gives short biographical sketches, the story of the opera and helpful criticism of the music, illustrated by excerpts from the score.)  
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 455 Richard Strauss's Salome.  
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